

What to Expect after Spinal Fusion for Idiopathic Scoliosis

Where will my child go after surgery ?

Your child will be monitored in the post anesthesia care unit (PACU) for a few hours. Meanwhile, your surgeon will speak with you and tell you about the surgery. Next, your child will be transferred to a hospital room. Your surgeon, a resident or advanced practice provider (APP) will examine your child after surgery.

Many patients stay for 2-5 days. The exact length of the hospital stay depends on many things and cannot be known until closer to the time to go home.



What will happen the first night in the hospital after spinal fusion?

It is normal for your child to be sleepy while recovering from anesthesia. They may have some face swelling from being positioned face down during surgery or they may have some throat soreness from the placement of a breathing tube during surgery. Some patients may experience nausea and/or vomiting the night after surgery, but it usually resolves by the next morning. Our Anesthesia Pain Management Team will be evaluating your child to make sure they are comfortable and receive medicines to control their pain.

Your child will have a urine collection tube, called a Foley catheter, that will be removed once your child is able to safely walk around. They will have intravenous catheters (IVs) for medication and fluids. Their legs will be placed in massage devices which help with blood flow and prevention of blood clots. Some patients who have spinal fusion surgery may need a drain tube placed during their surgery if the surgeon thinks this may help with bleeding or infection prevention.

Goals for the first **night** include:

- Improving pain control
- Starting to eat and drink by mouth with liquids or bland foods
- Begin turning in bed from one side to the other side every 2 hours
- Sitting on the edge of the bed and attempting to stand with help from the nurses

What will the first day after surgery be like?

Your child may have some blood drawn early in the morning to check lab results. Your child can start eating their regular foods. During the day, nurses will help you learn how to walk with your child safely. Sitting in chairs and walking are important to help your child have better pain control, move more comfortably and adapt to the new positioning of their spine and muscles. Your child will breathe into something called an incentive spirometer, to help their lung strength after the long surgery. If a low blood count is found with the lab work and your child has symptoms that support this, a blood transfusion may be needed.

Goals for the first **day** include:

- Walk up to 3-4 times, and if walking safely the Foley catheter will be removed
- Sit in chair for meals
- Take 10 breaths with incentive spirometer every hour while awake



What is expected in days 2-4 after surgery?

- The care team helps your child manage their pain with medicine taken by mouth and not through the IV.
- Nurses practice walking with your child so that you and your child feel safe walking distances up to 500 ft.
- We make sure that your child is urinating on their own after the catheter is removed and that they can pass gas from their bottom before going home. They do not need to have a bowel movement prior to leaving the hospital.
- If your child does have a drain or a wound vac, these will be removed before being discharged home. Drains are usually removed by the third day after surgery.
- Depending on your surgeon, you will be shown how to change the bandage that will be placed over your child's incision and receive instructions on how to keep it protected. You will also receive instructions about bathing/ showering.
- If your child needs to walk up and down stairs at home, we will have physical therapy work with your child to practice this.



When can we go home?

- Once your child is comfortable and has completed the above steps, they will be ready to be discharged.
- If you require bandage supplies you will be given these before leaving the hospital, or they will be ordered for you.
- You should have your first follow up appointment scheduled with your surgeon or APP 2-3 weeks after your child's surgery.

What will be expected at home ?

We want your child to continue to heal and thrive after surgery. You can help with this by:

- Continuing to have your child walk and sit in chairs during the day.
- Changing positions will help prevent muscle tightness.
- By week 2, we want your child to be working toward walking a mile each day. Walking promotes healing.
- Giving your child pain medication as prescribed.
- By day 5 after surgery, your child can begin to shower unless otherwise instructed by your surgeon.
- Plan for follow up appointments with your surgeon after surgery at 2 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months and 1 year.
- **Please limit your child's activity to walking after surgery. This means no running, jumping or physical activities. No lifting greater than 5-10 lbs.**
- Your surgeon will let you know when your child can resume more regular activity, but this will not occur until 3-6 months following surgery.

Contact Your Texas Children's Team, If Your Child Develops

- Redness
- Swelling
- Fever over 101°F
- New numbness or tingling
- Drainage other than small amount of blood
- Pain that is not controlled by the medicine you were sent home with
- Difficulty breathing

Contact Your Texas Children's Orthopedic Nurse Line

Medical Center: 832-822-3162 (8-4:30)

West Campus: 832-827-7678 (8-4:30)

Woodlands: 832-227-7813

Austin: 737-229-3514

Less urgent questions can be sent through MyChart

After Hours: 832-822-3250 and ask for the on-call orthopedic surgeon